

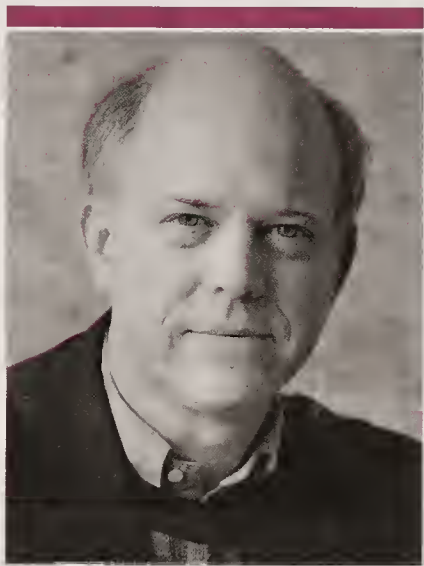
CONSENSUS, CONFLICT AND THE HUMANITIES

Jay Mechling
Chair
California Council for the Humanities

One of Dr. Sheldon Hackney's first acts as the new chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities was to call for "a national conversation" about the American dilemma that pits individual identity and rights against collective identity and responsibilities, in short, the Pluribus against the Unum. Dr. Hackney regrets the present state of public discourse on these matters, especially its tone, and he hopes that a more deliberate attempt to have a national conversation can restore civility and a sense of shared values and goals. Not surprisingly, Dr. Hackney believes the humanities have a great deal to offer this conversation.

This call seems reasonable, but talk of "a national conversation" rings alarm bells for many people. There are deep cultural roots to every person's response to phrases like "a national conversation," and even to converse in a preliminary way about such a national conversation requires that we understand the larger world views that lead people either to embrace or to suspect the phrase.

I believe that there is a middle-ground understanding of "a national conversation," so in these pages I want to characterize briefly both sides in the debate and to propose some ways of thinking about "culture" which will move us toward understanding what we should and should not expect of such a conversation.



Jay Mechling

Proponents of the conversation see the multicultural American social order as a remarkable but delicate construction, and they worry that we are putting too much strain on that order. The increasing incivility in public discourse, the conflicts that arise out of the politics of identity, and the signs that frustrated people are resorting to violence in the public realm all cause Dr. Hackney and others to believe that now is the time for thoughtful intervention. James Davison Hunter's fine book, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (Basic Books, 1991), nicely frames the nature and content of some of the most familiar public conflicts, and Dr. Hackney proposes that the national conversation will move us, as the title of his speech assures us, "Beyond the Culture Wars."

Perhaps the most important and exciting aspect of a national conversation will be the process, not the product.

Proponents of the national conversation acknowledge that a "national conversation" of sorts is going on in the mass media, but they argue that the electronic media, in particular, have degraded permanently the quality of public discourse. This is why we must locate the national conversation in settings for face-to-face communication.

Proponents of the conversation feel certain that the humanistic "method," the dialogue, can break the impasse and move us toward the discovery of shared American values. A traditional view from the humanities – namely, that humans across time and space share a fundamental human nature and a struggle to understand what it means to be human – underlies this faith in the positive outcome of dialogue.

Humanists are helpful guides in conducting dialogues, as they introduce the larger audience to the stories people in other times and places have heard and told as they search for meaning in their lives. In these stories, reason some humanists, lie common questions, common aspirations, common themes, and perhaps common wisdom that will help us see both the rich particularities of the person's "story" and its more universal lessons. Americans, these humanists argue, share more than they think they do, especially in this period of the celebration of differences. Although it was good that we have had a cultural period celebrating differences, the proponents suggest, perhaps it is time again to look beyond the differences in order to discover our shared values and goals.

All of these assumptions make some other people very nervous. Their reaction to a call for "a national conversation" asks "whose conversation and whose public good?" Who gets to sit at the table for the conversation?

Continued next page.

"TEXTILE DIARIES" EXHIBIT



Quilt historian Julie Silber and Roderick Kiracofe, author of *The American Quilt*, discuss one of the quilts of the "Textile Diaries: Quilts as Cultural Markers" exhibit during a day of public humanities lectures and discussions at the Grace Hudson Museum and Sun House in Ukiah. The exhibit examines quilts as diaries that record the personal and community events in the lives of quilters and quilt recipients. The exhibit moves next to the Community Memorial Museum of Sutter County in Yuba City, opening there on May 26, with related public humanities events scheduled for June 24 and 25.

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CONSENSUS, CONFLICT AND THE HUMANITIES *Continued*

How do people make their voices heard in this conversation, or who presumes to speak for others?

From this perspective, the proponents of the national conversation are mourning a consensus that never existed and a civility that served to keep things from changing. No wonder, say the critics, that those who saw their own values as the "shared" American values now feel threatened and want to call for a national conversation to recapture the lost consensus (or compliance, some would say) and civility. No wonder those people would feel safer in an America that shared their own values. The critics, in short, refuse to be nostalgic for an America they never knew or enjoyed.

To the degree that the mass media, especially the electronic media, portray a very narrow range of what it means to be human, the critics would agree with the proponents that the mass media are not a very good site for communication. Communication is power, and until everyone has equal access to that power, all communication should be suspected for the bias it carries.

Those made nervous by the talk of a national conversation feel safer with a decentralized, privatized understanding of American cultures. The complaint is not with the notion of having a dialogue but with the question of who gets to participate and toward what end. Expecting a consensus at the end of the dialogue, say the critics, is a worrisome thing. Better to think of a dialogue among equals as a process building mutual respect and tolerance rather than as a project arriving at a list of "shared" values. The social order is quite strong, in this view, and our diversity poses no real threat to the structure. Resisting a call for unity and shared values will not create

American society can stand a great deal more diversity and the accompanying tensions than can any lone individual, who would rather live without those tensions.

chaos but, quite the contrary, will open free spaces for living in the more comfortable and meaningful homeworlds of particular cultures.

Similarly, the appeal to a universal human nature has been used historically (and in the humanities) to legitimate certain people's historical and social positions as "human nature," thereby making it possible for some to be viewed as less-than-human, certainly as not "normal."



Even this brief sketch of the positions tells us that there are some very profound philosophical and political differences between the two sides (and there are probably more than two sides in this matter, anyway, since some neo-conservatives have criticized Dr. Hackney's call). These differences seem and feel incommensurable, incapable of reconciliation, compromise, and agreement.

Fortunately, cultural anthropologists, folklorists, and others who look closely at culture offer us useful ways to think about the sources of frustration in this debate. First, although it might be an interesting and beneficial exercise to discover whether Americans share more than they think they do, it is good to keep in mind that people do not have to

share very much for a culture to "hang together." After all, close observation of groups reveals that the diversity within a particular group often exceeds the diversity that exists between it and another group, yet the group manages to hang together, and even to thrive. In complex societies, people just have to know enough public culture in order to interact in the public realm. People are quite adept at being bi-cultural or, more likely, multi-cultural in their competence. As one anthropologist puts it, it is better to think of culture as a strategy for "the organization of diversity" than for "the replication of uniformity."

What this means for us is that the proponents of the national conversation probably are worrying too much about the perceived lack of consensus. Or, put differently, American society can stand a great deal more diversity and the accompanying tensions than, perhaps, can any lone individual, who would rather live without those tensions. Part of being a modern American is learning to live with those personal tensions without worrying too much about the society's disintegration.

Second, some of the most interesting things happen at the "borders" where cultures meet. The "centers" of private cultures, such

as ethnic or regional cultures, teach us much about a way to be human, but it is very easy to romanticize those centers and to insist that they are the sites for the making of "authentic" meanings. We find more meaning-making at the borders, as people meet and attempt to communicate the meanings of their own lives and to understand the lives of others. This busy, messy, noisy place—let's call it the public square—is where people and cultures encounter and may even change one another.

Humanists who embrace this view of culture understand that there are all sorts of voices speaking from the centers of cultures, and that there are all sorts of voices speaking from the margins. Some voices speak of what goes on in the public square. As in the noisy marketplace, perhaps the most important and exciting aspect of a national conversation will be the process, not the product. Having a voice in the public square means that one is in the process of actively constructing one's identity, both for other people and for oneself. We need to learn to become comfortable in this messy public square, reminding ourselves that we best discover what it means to be human in that noisy space where people tell their stories and listen to others.

So let us throw away any expectation that the goal of a national conversation is the discovery of a putative American identity. Let us try to formalize some settings for the conversation not out of a mistaken sense of urgency but, more leisurely, out of the sense that the goal of the conversation is the process itself. We might even come to enjoy and value the excitement and uncertainty there always has been in the American public square. ■

MOTHEREAD ENTERS A NEW PHASE

Ava Chavez, a parent education social worker in Los Angeles, remembers that her earliest encounter with books and stories came through her grandfather in Mexico.

"He would gather all the children together and read us the story of Pinocchio. In his version, whenever Pinocchio lied his nose grew long, but his ears also became red and glowed. Now I tell my children the same story and warn them that when they lie, I can see their ears turn red."

Within the next few months, Chavez will guide about a dozen families in Los Angeles to their own memorable encounters with the power of books and stories. She is one of ten parent education social workers who recently completed the first Motherhead Training Institute held in California and who will soon lead parent

classes in CCH's Motherhead family reading program. Serving mostly mothers of young children, these classes teach the value of reading children's literature to youngsters. The classes also provide parents with tools for discussing the universal concerns embodied in the stories—themes such as sharing, loss, unconditional parental love, sibling rivalry, the use of one's imagination, finding one's inner strength.

The Training Institute, led by Motherhead founder Nancye Gaj and Lynn Kernodle, North Carolina Humanities Council Motherhead coordinator, ushered in the second phase of CCH's efforts to disseminate the Motherhead program throughout Los Angeles. In the first phase, five parent group leaders from El Nido Family

Continued on page 6.



In conjunction with the Council's Motherhead Training Institute in Los Angeles, nationally known storyteller Malife Nkruhmah performed traditional and original tales in the African Griot manner at the Los Angeles Central Library and the California Afro-American Museum. Nkruhmah is shown here with Harry Robinson, age 10.

Photo by Elliot Klein.

"BORDER VOICES" AND WHITMAN'S "TEEMING NATION OF NATIONS"

On March 12 and 13, award-winning poets and student poets, musical performers and literature scholars, actors and booksellers, parents, teachers, and several thousand other interested participants gathered in San Diego's Balboa Park for the "Border Voices Multicultural Poetry Fair." Through readings, workshops, panel discussions and performances, the fair examined and celebrated the diversity of cultures and subcultures that is the United States, as expressed in contemporary American poetry.

The fair also marked the culmination of a larger, year-long literary project that put twenty-five published poets into San Diego county schools, allowing some two thousand elementary, junior high, and high school students to explore the art of poetry in a multicultural context. As part of this effort the project published *Border Voices*, an anthology that includes poems by the major poets appearing at the fair and by more than one hundred San Diego students. The project has also begun a program called "Poets at Bat" in cooperation with the San Diego Padres, and has been asked to select the poems for San Diego's "Poetry in Motion" project, which puts poems on placards printed in the city's buses and trolleys.

The following article is an edited excerpt from Fred Moramarco's opening remarks at the poetry fair. Moramarco is a poet and critic who lives in San Diego and teaches American literature at San Diego State University. He is co-editor of *Men of Our Time*, *An Anthology of Male Poetry in Contemporary America* and co-author of *Modern American Poetry, 1865-1950*. His poems have appeared in "Poetry East," "Literary Review," and "Pearl," as well as in other journals and reviews.

The poetic voices of the celebration of American poetry we're calling "Border Voices" reflect the spirit of the border that lies just minutes away from San Diego's Balboa Park. That border is a place where two cultures come together and create a third culture that is an amalgam of both, but with a distinctive quality of its own. In a broader sense, the "border" is symbolic of all of American culture, of the whole of American experience, which is made up of the interaction and intersection of diverse national experiences. With the exception of Native Americans, who were here when our ancestors arrived, we are all hyphenated Americans, whether the word before that hyphen is African, Arabic, Hispanic, Italian, Chinese, Japanese, Irish, or any of the rest of the world's nations that have contributed to our astonishing diversity as a people, which is the very source of our strength.

Our greatest American poet, Walt Whitman, realized that our



Fred Moramarco reads a poem at Jack Murphy Stadium during the San Diego Padres Opening Day ceremonies on April 4th. Photo by Barbara Bowen-Doty.

diversity was our strength, and that our poetry was the best expression of that diversity over a century ago when he wrote in his famous Preface to *Leaves of Grass* the following prophetic lines:

"The Americans of all nations at any time upon the earth have probably the fullest poetical nature. The United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem....Here is not merely a nation but a teeming nation of nations....The American poets are to enclose old and new, for America is the race of races....Of all nations the United States with veins full of poetical stuff most need poets and will doubtless have the greatest and use them the greatest. Their Presidents shall not be their common referee so much as their poets shall."

Here in the late twentieth century Whitman seems to be speaking directly to all of us. Now, when his vision of a diverse, multi-cultural America is thriving more than it ever has before, his words seem more prophetic than ever. In this media-saturated, endlessly commercial era that we live in, we have not heard enough from our poets about the state of our nation and of our lives. But our poets are our nation's grandest and truest expression, and the

purpose of "Border Voices" has been to put us back in touch with that truth.

THE NAMES OF THE POETS

From Cesar Gonzalez and Fumiko Tachibene to Steve Kowit and Joe Milosch, from Diana Garcia to Veronica Cunningham,

and Kathleen Iddings and Lovern Brown the very names of the poets of "Border Voices" illustrate the "teeming nation of nations" Whitman wrote about.

Philip Levine, one of America's most highly regarded poets, is the son of Russian Jews who emigrated to New York, then to Detroit where they met and married. Levine grew up in an ethnically and racially diverse neighborhood in Detroit, a neighborhood that is portrayed in much of his poetry including his 1990 book, *A Walk with Thomas Jefferson*, in which he recounts a visit to the old neighborhood and a long talk with an old African American man who has been a janitor at a local school there for all the intervening years.

Gary Soto is a Chicano poet from Fresno whose poetry, from his first book, *The Elements of San Joaquin* to his more recent *Black Hair*, finds its sources in his Hispanic heritage. Simon Ortiz is a Native American of the Acoma Pueblo culture whose books are saturated with the lore of his people and their struggle to maintain their dignity in a land from which they have been dispossessed. His most recent book, *Woven Stone*, is a repository intended to preserve the threatened traditions of the Native American people.

Sherley Anne Williams is a San Diegan whose parents were migrant workers from Texas and whose work, including *The Peacock Poems* and *Someone Sweet*

Continued on page 4.

UNREQUITED LOVE

Because you stared into the black lakes of her eyes,
you shall drown in them.

Because you tasted the persimmon on her lips,
you shall dig your moist grave.

Her rope of black hair does not signify a ladder of escape,
but of capture,

the warm flesh of her arms and thighs — not cradles of comfort,
but of despair.

She shall always be waiting for you in an empty room
overlooking the sea.

She shall always sit this way, her back toward you,
her shoulders bare,

her silk kimono in manifolds around her waist —
blue as the changeless sea.

You sit prostrate before her, bruise your forehead,
chant the Dharmas.

Five thousand years together in the same four-and-a-mat room,
and she has not learned to love you.

Marilyn Chin

From *Border Voices: An Anthology by Major Poets and San Diego Students*
J.F. Webb, 1994

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A NEW STORY

Several years ago,
I was a patient at the VA hospital
in Ft. Lyons, Colorado.
I got a message to call this woman,
so I called her up.
She said to me,
"I'm looking for an Indian.
Are you an Indian?"
"Yes," I said.
"Oh good," she said,
"I'll explain why I'm looking
for an Indian."
And she explained.
"Every year, we put on a parade
in town, a Frontier Day Parade.
It's exciting and important,
and we have a lot of participation."
"Yes," I said.
"Well," she said, "Our theme
is Frontier,
and we try to do it well.
In the past, we used to make up
paper mache Indians,
but that was years ago."
"Yes," I said.
"And then more recently,
we had some people
who dressed up as Indians
to make it more authentic,
you understand, real people."
"Yes," I said.
"Well," she said,
"that didn't seem right,
but we had a problem.
There was a lack of Indians."
"Yes," I said.
"This year, we wanted to do it right.
We have looked hard and high
for Indians but there didn't seem
to be any in this part of Colorado."
"Yes," I said.
"We want to make it real, you understand,
put a real Indian on a float,
not just a paper mache dummy
or an Anglo dressed as an Indian
but a real Indian with feathers and paint.
Maybe even a medicine man."
"Yes," I said.
"And then we learned the VA hospital
had an Indian here.
We were so happy,"
she said, happily.
"Yes," I said.
"there are several of us here."
"Oh, good," she said.

Well, last Spring
I got another message
at the college where I worked.
I called the woman.
She was so happy
that I returned her call.
And then she explained
that Sir Francis Drake,
the English pirate
(she didn't say that, I did)
was going to land on the coast
of California in June, again.
And then she said
she was looking for Indians...
"No," I said. No.

Simon J. Ortiz
From *Woven Stone*
University of Arizona Press, 1992
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"BORDER VOICES" Continued

Angel Chile, draws heavily on her African American blues heritage. Leroy Quintana is an American Book Award winner whose poems are derived from the folk tales he learned from his grandfather as well as from his experience as a veteran of the Vietnam war. Quincy Troupe, who describes himself as "the son of the second greatest catcher in the Negro Baseball League," documents the rhythms and vitality of a St. Louis boyhood shaped by jazz, sports, and highly inventive word-play in his collection of poems, *Weather Report*. Marilyn Chin was born in Hong Kong, and her books, *Dwarf Bamboo* and *The Phoenix Gone, The Terrace Empty*, describe the two worlds, Asian and American, she has lived in.

And Jack Grapes is a poet and editor whose Belgian-born mother and Russian-born father were both raised on the Lower East Side of New York and moved to New Orleans, where Jack himself was raised and lived before moving to Los Angeles, where he edits *Onthebus*, a magazine that personifies the rich and diverse Southern California literary scene.

WALT WHITMAN'S AMERICA AND OURS

These are just a few of the "border voices." But these voices make clear that American poetry has come to a new place in the late twentieth century. They demonstrate that contemporary American poetry, far from being a remote, academic, esoteric pastime, reflects the vastness and variety of America's people. This poetry is indeed the poetry of a "teeming nation of nations."

Whitman celebrated American pluralism. In his work, he evoked and prophesied an America rich in the variety of its cultures and people, not a "melting pot" that homogenizes all of its citizens, but a tapestry or quilt that expresses its beauty in the multitudinous assortment of its people. He looked forward to a time when poets would be able to rise to "the gigantic and generous treatment worthy of it."

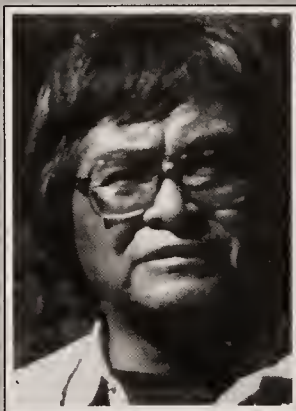
A century and a half after he wrote those words that vision has been realized. Although it's hard to retain Whitman's inspiring optimism at the end of a century of

devastating and unprecedented violence, we are more and more coming to realize that celebrating and respecting our differences is what brings us together as Americans. Or, as I read on a t-shirt the other day, "In our differences are solutions."

Whitman's America was, like our own, an America filled with paradoxes and contradictions, filled with goodness and wickedness: "Great is Goodness; I do not know what it is any more than I know what health is...but I know it is great. Great is wickedness...I find I often admire it just as much as I admire goodness:/Do you call that a paradox? It certainly is a paradox." And in lines that embody the Whitmanic spirit more than any other, "Do I contradict myself? Very well then...I contradict myself; I am large...I contain multitudes." These words also express the spirit of the "Border Voices" festival. Not all the "border voices" celebrate the American adventure; you will hear from among them contradictions and paradoxes. Many of the poets speak of our



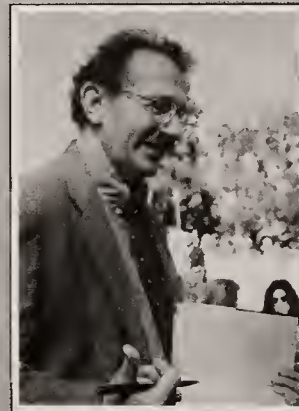
Marilyn Chin



Simon J. Ortiz



Sherley Anne Williams



Philip Levine

I SEE MY LIFE . . .

I

I see my life by my son's
eyes know his mind is in some
part my own that he carries
me as he moves through the world.
I am some percent of the
sum of my mother and my
father of the grandparents
the old ones from whom I get
the shape of my hands my head
maybe my walk and the eyes
that stare from this face. I don't
know all that comes through them to
me and him who are now their
factors in the world. Yet I
am me; he is he.

Sherley Anne Williams
From *Border Voices: An Anthology by Major Poets and San Diego Students* ♦ J.F. Webb, 1994
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II

We're named
in the sight of the people
in our family houses
in each of our own hearts. I
didn't learn how to call myself
until I was twenty-four.
I cling to the secret child-
hood names only a very
few can know.
I gave my son
four names; he added two more.
In the privacy of his
own room he calls himself by
others I may never know.

III

My son springs up from the bottom
of the pool head back eyes closed
water sheeting his body
with light and caught like stars in
the dark burrs of his hair. It's
not the sun whose shine dances
on the waves. That is his face.
And although I see the name
he has named himself I would
never tell it even if
my mind my mouth could say it.

disappointments and failures as a people; many of them express anger and rage; some of them speak of the suffering endured by the dispossessed in our country – the homeless, the mentally ill, the abused, the poor and the oppressed. Whitman would have understood the gap between the promise of America and its actuality as reflected by many of these poets. He lived at a time when the great contradiction which underlies all others ruptured the country and set brother against brother in our tragic Civil War – the contradiction of the existence of slavery in a country founded on the basic principle that all people are created equal.

THE LANGUAGE OF TRUTH

All poetry is not created equal, but surely we have too often valued only an elitist poetry characterized by the mastery of conventional language and the conveyance of received wisdom. We have not paid enough attention to the many poetic voices of America's many peoples.

"Border Voices" celebrates the poetry of children as well as the elderly, of professional poets as well as amateur versifiers. It includes poets who were educated on the streets of the inner cities and barrios or ghettos and the war-ravaged jungles of Vietnam, as well as the vast plains of the midwest and the courtyards at Harvard. It demonstrates that the poetry of work and struggle is more compelling than the poetry of detached social observation. It recognizes that poets write as men and women with diverse cultural backgrounds that shape the language they speak and write, rather than as generic human beings.

Listening to these many voices, we come to realize that although poetry grows out of particular and unique experiences, it is a universal language, not the property of any age group or cultural clique; that poetry is the language of the heart and soul, the language of truth and our spiritual oneness – so very far from the languages of commerce and advertising and politics that dominate so much of our daily discourse. What we hear in these "border voices" is a poetry that includes rather than excludes, a poetry that embraces mystery and uncertainty as well as knowledge and understanding. This poetics of inclusion moves us closer to recognizing and assimilating the uniqueness of the poetry of our place and our time.

My son Nicholas – who, I'm happy to say, is one of the festival poets – is fond of quoting the words of the great Spanish poet, Gustavo Aldolpho Becquer:

"Todo el mundo siente. Solo a algunas seres les es dado el guardar, como un tesoro, la memoria viva de lo que han sentido. Yo creo que estos son los poetas. Es mas, creo que unicamente por esto lo son."

("The whole world feels. Only a few are given the ability to guard, like a treasure, the living memory of what they have felt. I believe that these are the poets. What's more, I believe that they are poets only because of this.")

The poets of the "Border Voices" have indeed guarded the treasures of our feelings and have found the words to express them. ■

COMING CLOSE

Take this quiet woman, she has been standing before a polishing wheel for over three hours, and she lacks twenty minutes before she can take a lunch break. Is she a woman? Consider the arms as they press the long brass tube against the buffer, they are striated along the triceps, the three heads of which clearly show. Consider the fine dusting of dark down above the upper lip, and the beads of sweat that run from under the red kerchief across the brow and are wiped away with a blackening wristband in one odd motion a child might make to say No! No! You must come closer to find out, you must hang your tie and jacket in one of the lockers in favor of a black smock, you must be prepared to spend shift after shift hauling off the metal trays of stock, bowing first, knees bent for a purchase, then lifting with a gasp, the first word of tenderness between the two of you, then you must bring new trays of dull, unpolished tubes. You must feed her, as they say in the language of the place. Make no mistake, the place has a language, and if by some luck the power were cut, the wheel slowed to a stop so that you suddenly saw it was not a solid object but so many separate bristles forming in motion a perfect circle, she would turn to you and say, "Why?" Not the old *why* of *why must I spend five nights a week?* Just, "Why?" Even if by some magic you knew, you wouldn't dare speak for fear of her laughter, which now you have anyway as she places the five tapering fingers of her filthy hand on the arm of your white shirt to mark you for your own, now and forever.

Philip Levine
From *What Work Is*
Alfred A. Knopf, 1991
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H

Whitman evoked and prophesied an America rich in the variety of its cultures and people, not a "melting pot" that homogenizes all of its citizens, but a tapestry or quilt that expresses its beauty in the multitudinous assortment of its people.

H

STUDENT POETS

Some two thousand students in San Diego county schools explored the art of poetry with twenty-five published poets during the last year. One hundred of these students had their poems published in the *Border Voices* anthology. The two student poems reprinted here were judged to be among the best.

First place

IMAGINATION

The lovely sorrow
of a dragon's heart
is the boom
of a laughing storm.

The edge
of an angry mountain
when it rains
plays games of feelings
and memories.

When animals look
in mirrors of shadows,
a kind moment
of truthful music from the sun
can be heard.

Imagination is never dull
and frantic thoughts
can be so exciting
they'll make you
burst with shiver.

James Henry
(Age 9)
Hawthorne Elementary School
Poet-Teacher: Veronica Cunningham
Teacher: Ann MacDonald

Second place

ONLY WHAT IT WANTS

She's dark and smiling
The bandanna that holds her
hair allows her earrings to dangle.
Her eyebrows are raised and she
laughs. Her arms are thrown and
from one a watch shines. Her
tank top reveals only what it
wants to and she laughs. Her
legs are crossed comfortably. The
plant shines sun and an uneven
pattern that a glass of water
makes on the sill. The radio hides
behind her and she laughs. She
will laugh forever here because
it's black and white here and
she laughs.

Sarah Merchant
(Age 14)
Lewis Junior High
Poet-Teacher: Dawn Diez Willis
Teacher: Linda Good



"Sadness" Artist: Karin-Marie Huelsman. Age 8.

From *Border Voices: An Anthology by Major Poets and San Diego Students*
J.F. Webb, 1994 ♦ Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

Calendar of Humanities Events

The public humanities programs listed here received funding support from the California Council for the Humanities. Please note that dates and times should be confirmed with local sponsors. These listings are often provided to the Council well before final arrangements are made.

E X H I B I T S

- Through July 31** "Runs, Hits and an Era: The Pacific Coast League 1903-1958" is an exhibit of photographs, memorabilia, and rare video footage from the early days of West Coast baseball. The exhibit will be accompanied by lectures, panel discussions, and a film-and-discussion series throughout the spring and summer. At The Oakland Museum, 1000 Oak, Oakland. Call 510/238-3402 for more information.
- May 11 – June 26** "Audubon's Animals and Birds" is an exhibit examining the work of John James Audubon as art and as statements about American and European attitudes toward the wilderness. At the Museum of History and Art, Ontario. 909/983-3198.
- May 26 – Aug. 14** "Textile Diaries: Quilts as Cultural Markers" is a traveling exhibition of quilts from the Kansas State Historical Society and the Kansas Quilt Project. At the Community Memorial Museum of Sutter County, 1333 Butte House Road, Yuba City. Call 916/741-7141 for more information.
- July 16/23 – Dec. 31** In complementary exhibits in Willits (opening July 16) and Ukiah (opening July 23), the "Journey of the Frolic" project explores how an 1850 shipwreck on the Mendocino coast affected the transformation of the region into a complex, integrated, multi-cultural society. At the Mendocino County Museum, 400 E. Commercial Street, Willits and at the Grace Hudson Museum, 431 S. Main Street, Ukiah. For more information, contact Dan Taylor at 707/459-2736.

E V E N T S

- May 11** "The Artificial City: Concepts, Dreams, and Realities" lecture series features Mack Scogin, chairman of the Department of Architecture at Harvard. The series examines the development of the urban environment in San Diego and Southern California. 7:30 p.m. At The Athenaeum, 1008 Wall Street, La Jolla. 619/454-5872.
- May 18** "Thomas Jefferson in Bridgeport" is a chautauqua performance in which scholar Clay Jenkinson portrays the nation's third president. Contact Arlene Reveal at 619/932-7482 for exact time and location.
- May 22** "Writing & Broadcasting the Coast League" is a panel discussion led by historians and broadcasters about baseball and the early days of sports broadcasting and telecasting. It is part of the "Runs, Hits and an Era" exhibition. 2 p.m. The Oakland Museum, 1000 Oak Street, Oakland. 510/238-3402.
- May 24** "The Golden Age of the American Musical" is the final lecture/discussion in "The Road to Oklahoma!" series. Joe Marchi, director of the Center for the American Musical and professor at Canada College, will lead the discussion. 7:30 p.m. At the Redwood City Public Library, 1044 Middlefield Road, Redwood City. 415/780-7061.

May 25 "Thomas Jefferson in Bishop" is a chautauqua performance in which scholar Clay Jenkinson portrays the nation's third president. Call Irene Sorenson at 619/873-6747 for exact time and location.

June 22 - July 2 "Democracy in America" is a series of chautauqua programs presenting portrayals of the historical figures Alexis de Tocqueville, Frances Wright, Horace Greeley, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Maria Stuart, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, and P.T. Barnum. Sponsored by the Inland Empire Educational Foundation (IEEF), the programs will be held throughout San Bernardino and Riverside counties. For further information, dates, times, and locations, contact IEEF coordinator Karen Kraut at 909/888-3113.

July 14 Mike Davis, author of *City of Quartz*, is the featured speaker in "The Artificial City: Concepts, Dreams, and Realities" lecture series. 7:30 p.m. At The Athenaeum, 1008 Wall Street, La Jolla. 619/454-5872.

July 14 – 17 "Many Cultures, One Nation" in San Diego is one of 10 programs presented in California by the Smithsonian Institution in partnership with CCH and Wells Fargo Bank. A keynote address by Carlos Cortés, professor of history at UC Riverside, and other events focus on themes of diversity and multiculturalism. For more information about times and locations contact the Smithsonian National Associate program at 202/287-3210.

July 16 "The Artificial City: Concepts, Dreams, and Realities" lecture series features speaker Ed Soja, professor of urban planning at UCLA. 7:30 p.m. The Athenaeum, 1008 Wall Street, La Jolla. 619/454-5872.

"Writers of the Historic Wilshire Corridor"

Timed to coincide with the restoration of 38 vintage neon signs that once proclaimed the Wilshire Corridor as the cultural, commercial and intellectual center of Los Angeles, this series of ten lectures and four discussion groups explores the literary life of Los Angeles between the two world wars. The series began in April and will continue until the end of the year. For more information about the programs listed here or future programs, contact the LA Cultural Affairs Department at 213/485-2433.

May 14 "Chester Himes: An African American Viewpoint in Los Angeles of the Early 1940s" is a lecture by Dr. John Swift, professor of English and comparative literary studies at Occidental College. 10 a.m. tour and 11 a.m. lecture. At Hollyhock House (Barnsdall Art Park).

June 12 "Latin American Literary Figures in Los Angeles, 1920s-1940s" is a lecture by writer Max Benavidez. 11 a.m. At Robert Burns Park (corner of Beverly Blvd. and Van Ness Ave.).

June 25 "Octavio Paz in Los Angeles: The Labyrinth of Solitude" is a lecture by writer Max Benavidez. 11 a.m. At the Page Museum Park (corner of Ogden and 6th Ave.).

July 10 "Aldous Huxley's Los Angeles" is a lecture by Dr. Walter Wells, professor of English at CSU Dominguez Hills. 11 a.m. At Page Museum Park (corner of Wilshire Blvd. and Curson Ave.).

MOTHEREAD continued

Centers, a Los Angeles area family counseling agency, conducted eight pilot groups – including a Fatheread group with a dozen male parolees living in a halfway house – in Pacoima, Watts, and sites in South Central Los Angeles.

"The pilot classes demonstrated that this is a great way to introduce families to the joys of reading together, the magic of stories, and the unending pleasure derived from books," says CCH Associate

Director Susan Gordon. "In Pacoima, for example, mothers who attended the first group liked it so well that they wanted to continue. They recruited the mothers from the second and third pilot groups to join with them to get children's books from the library and carry on the reading sessions together. Other mothers have told us that their children are watching less

television, demanding instead to be read to in the evening."

As a result of the Training Institute, CCH's Motherhead program will now be able to reach a wider population of low-income families through newly forged links with five additional human services agencies – the LA Department of Children's Services (Black Family Investment Project), Concerned Citizens of South Central Los Angeles, All People's Christian

Center, and Kaiser Permanente facilities in Baldwin Park and Watts. With a new total of fifteen Motherhead parent group leaders, CCH plans to reach four hundred fifty families during this second phase of the program. An additional Training Institute for twenty parent group leaders is being planned for November.

[See also the related Motherhead item on the next page.]

Humanities News

CCH Alumni Profile



Jean R. Wente

*Chairman, Wente Brothers, Inc.
Vineyards and Wineries*

*Founding Member of the Council:
1974 - 1979*

Personal Information:

- Native Californian.
- B.A in European history, Stanford University.
- Three grown children - all in the family business; five grandchildren.

"I like to do things that will stretch me and be part of an on-going learning process. I dread the feeling that I am standing still."

Some Current Community Activities:

- Founding board member and current chair of the Museum Trustee Association;
- Trustee and immediate past president of California College of Arts and Crafts;
- Trustee of World Affairs Council of Northern California;
- Member, California Commission on Campaign Financing;
- Member, Humanities Study Group, Stanford University.

About the Museum Trustee

Association: "It's the only organization that deals with issues of museum governance from the perspective of the trustees. The board is drawn from all around the country, and that in itself is fascinating. We also represent all museum disciplines, so that all of our members get to learn more about their own particular disciplines as well as spread their wings and sample what other museums are doing."

About the Stanford Humanities

Study Group: "It's a wonderful way to stay in touch, not only with what's going on at the university but with interesting people. We're really a rather rowdy group, not like-minded at all."

On the Value of a Humanities

Education: "It provides a broad picture and is a constant reminder that individual freedom requires being a responsible citizen. Because of it, I have never stopped reading. I always have two or three books going."

Currently Reading: "Jefferson by Max Byrd and a mystery I picked up at the airport."

Memories of Founding the

Council: "It was an exciting time. Any time you start a new project you are doubly fired up to make it go. Just as we were getting our act together, we had a board retreat and invited people in to get their impressions of where we might go and how the humanities were perceived by the public. The enthusiasm at that retreat solidified our commitment to taking the Council forward."

Words of Advice: "Some things never change. First, money is always front and center. Second, there is still a small amount of trouble making the Council visible - and visible as a humanities organization rather than a humanitarian organization. Third, there is a changing attitude about volunteering, and with that has come a changed perception of what one does with one's disposable income and time. We are all going to have to work much harder to promote and hold on to our own desire to volunteer for the greater community."

Governor Appoints New Council Members

In March, Governor Wilson appointed two new members to three-year terms on the Council.

Ann Nickoll, a businesswoman from Beverly Hills, has been active in state and local community service and politics for more than thirty years. She is a member of the Beverly Hills Realty Board, has served on the board of the Beverly Hills Education Foundation, was a mayoral appointee to the Beverly Hills Affordable Housing Committee, and was a member of the El Rodeo School PTA board from the 1960s through the mid-1980s. Nickoll has also served as the co-chair for the Los Angeles Campaign Fund, a bipartisan effort to fund and elect pro-choice women, and as a member of the state Republican party's Resolutions Committee and the State Party Center Committee. Nickoll received her bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan.

Christine Sisley is the executive director of The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation in Los Angeles. She joined the staff of the foundation in 1982 and assumed the position of executive director in 1986. Prior to 1982, she held various administrative posts at Descanso Gardens, The Museum of Contemporary Art, the Coro Foundation and Occidental College. For the past four years, she has served on the Board of Directors of the Patron Saints Foundation, a small foundation making health care-related grants to nonprofit organizations in the San Gabriel Valley. In January, she began a two-year term as a member of the Education Committee of the Council on Foundations, a Washington, D.C.-based national trade association for philanthropic organizations. Sisley was born and raised in Los Angeles. She attended UCLA and the University of Redlands, where she earned a bachelor's degree in English literature and minored in French literature.

Motheread Program Seeks Book Suggestions

The Motheread curriculum has been carefully designed along thematic lines by educators, humanities scholars, and parents. Its book list consists of many stories featuring ethnically-defined characters. For example, there are currently thirty-five titles with African American characters. A similar list with Native American characters has been compiled and is being field tested at an Indian reservation in Minnesota, the only other state outside of North Carolina and California to use Motheread.

Part of CCH's contribution to the Motheread program will be the addition of books with Latino/Chicano and Asian/Asian American characters to the curriculum. Members of the public who have such books to suggest are invited to donate a copy of the complete book by sending it to Kishna Griffin, Motheread Coordinator, California Council for the Humanities, 315 W. Ninth Street, Suite 702, Los Angeles, CA 90015. Please attach a 3x5 card with a one-sentence description of the humanities theme in the story or the lesson to be learned from the book.

Internships Available

The Council has a number of internship opportunities available for undergraduate and graduate students in humanities disciplines. Opportunities exist in each of the Council's offices. Interested students should contact Ralph Lewin in the San Diego office (619/232-4020), Susan Gordon in the Los Angeles office (213/623-5993) or Alden Mudge in the San Francisco office (415/391-1474).

BECOME A FRIEND OF THE HUMANITIES!

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I want to join with fellow Californians in support of CCH's expanding public humanities programs. Enclosed is my tax-deductible gift. Every dollar I contribute will be matched by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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- * Our thanks in Humanities Network and in CCH's Biennial Report.

☐ Good Friend
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☐ True Friend
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- * All of the above, plus a free year's subscription to "Humanities," the illustrated bimonthly review published by the NEH.

☐ Best Friend
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CALIFORNIA COUNCIL FOR THE HUMANITIES

The California Council for the Humanities is a partnership of public and academic life whose purpose is to invite all Californians to a lifelong exploration of the cultures, the stories, and the values that constitute our most vital inheritance.

Since its creation in 1975, the Council has awarded more than \$12 million to more than 1300 nonprofit organizations, enabling them to produce exhibits, films and radio programs, and lecture series and conferences on topics of significance to Californians.

The Council also serves Californians with projects of its own. These include the national dissemination of a Scholars in the Schools program; publications distributed to libraries, scholars and the public; coordination and support of local and statewide coalitions; an initiative on the common good; and, in 1994, a community project in San Diego, a Motherhead pilot project in Los Angeles, a chautauqua tour commemorating Thomas Jefferson's 250th birthday, and a ten-city cultural diversity program series presented by the Smithsonian Institution.

The Council is the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities and is supported by grants from NEH, corporations and foundations, and by contributions from individuals. An independent, not-for-profit organization, the Council receives no state funds.

Major grant proposals are accepted on April 1 and October 1. Proposal planning grant requests, minigrant requests, and film-and-speaker minigrant requests may be submitted at any time. Interested nonprofit organizations should request a free copy of the updated 1992-1993 Guide to the Grant Program from the San Francisco office.

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Los Angeles

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Irvine

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Publications and Information Officer

NEXT PROPOSAL DEADLINE: October 1, 1994

Proposals must conform to the updated 1992-1993 Guide to the Grant Program. Send 15 copies to the San Francisco office by the due date.

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Suite 601
San Francisco, CA 94108
415 / 391-1474

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